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ABSTRACT

Suggesting that Reading Recovery belongs on the restructuring agenda of American education, this booklet introduces educators and others to how Reading Recovery works, how teachers are trained to use the program, and how it can be implemented in a school or district. Sections of the booklet are: Introduction; Overview of Reading Recovery; How Reading Recovery Works; Personnel Roles in Reading Recovery; Getting Started; and Reading Recovery as a Systematic Intervention. (RS)

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Restructuring Beginning Reading with the Reading Recovery Approach

Gay Su Pinnell

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GAY SU PINNELL

Gay Su Pinnell is an associate professor in the College of Education, Ohio State University, where she teaches courses on language development, literacy, and children's literature. A former primary school teacher, she continues to teach children daily as part of the Reading Recovery program described in this fastback. She also is principal investigator for the Early Literacy Research Project, sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

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The author is indebted to Billie Askew of the Texas Woman's University Reading Recovery site for the examples used in this fastback.

Series Editor, Derek L. Burleson

Restructuring Beginning Reading with the Reading Recovery Approach

by
Gay Su Pinnell

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Introduction

Six-year-old Tanya turned the page of her new book, *The Lion's Tail*, glancing quickly at the the illustration of the dejected lion looking for his tail. She hesitated on some words and appeared to be confused momentarily. Then, starting the page again, she proceeded with confidence. Tanya's teacher closely watched her reading but did not interrupt to correct. Tanya went on to finish the story, laughing at the ending when the lion discovers he is sitting on his tail. She read the selection fluently and used appropriate phrasing, making the dialogue come alive. She was checking on herself, self-correcting when necessary. Tanya looks like she is on the way to becoming a good reader. Yet, only 12 weeks before, she was judged to be one of the lowest-achieving readers in her first-grade class.

Before starting school, Tanya's family considered her a capable child. Although she had limited experience with books, she was a good talker and enjoyed telling family stories and jokes. From listening to the radio and recordings, she had learned to sing many songs. However, when she went to school the criteria for judging her capabilities changed. As she finished kindergarten and entered first grade, it was evident that she was not keeping up with the other children in learning to read. She loved to listen to stories; but when she took up a simple book, she "invented" stories to go with the pictures and did not begin to notice details of print. When directed to look at words, she tried to sound them out; but she seemed to grasp wildly for any

word beginning with the same sound. While she enjoyed many aspects of school, Tanya was confused when it came to reading.

Tanya was selected to participate in the Reading Recovery program, an early intervention effort adopted by her school district. Tanya has been receiving intensive, individual, half-hour lessons every day from a teacher who involves her in reading and writing activities and interacts with her in a way that supports her development of the strategies that good readers use. Tanya's teacher constantly observes and records her behavior, calling attention to Tanya's effective actions. She takes into account Tanya's existing set of understandings and asks questions in a way that helps this young reader use what she already knows.

Reading Recovery is an intervention approach that targets the lowest-achieving children in first-grade reading. The approach is based on the research of Marie M. Clay, a developmental child psychologist from New Zealand. Her studies revealed behaviors that signal the internal processes of young readers and provided teachers with effective ways to observe children's reading and writing behavior. She studied the characteristics of good readers and those of readers having difficulty. And she analyzed the ways effective teachers worked with these young readers. The program has demonstrated success in teaching low-achieving children to become independent, efficient readers and writers.

Good readers access a range of information as they construct meaning from written language. They make connections between the text they see and the knowledge they have previously acquired from experience and from using language. They predict according to what makes sense and what fits their implicit knowledge of language patterns. They check or select between possibilities, using their knowledge of the visual features of letters and words and the relationships between the sounds of language and letters. They are not conscious of their cognitive activities but are, in fact, using many different cues or sources of information simultaneously.

Like Tanya, readers perform these complex operations rapidly; but at the same time, they keep their focus on the meaning of the text. Good readers use a range of strategies "on the run," so to speak. Mature readers generally read silently; but if they read out loud, their understanding of the text is shown by fluency and phrasing, sometimes called "expression." Good readers have a coherent system, one that extends its own capacity (Clay 1979; 1991). According to Clay, "This could be characterized as a self-extending system of literacy expertise, as the act of reading expands the range and effectiveness of strategies which the reader can bring to the task, and the size of the practised response repertoire upon which he can draw" (Clay 1991, p. 817).

Reading Recovery was the product of 10 years of research on young readers, both those having success and those experiencing difficulty. Its success in New Zealand (see Clay 1985) led to the adoption of Reading Recovery as a national program in that country. The great majority of children in the program make accelerated progress and catch up with other students after 12 to 14 weeks of intensive instruction that involves immersion in reading and writing with the support of a trained teacher.

Reading Recovery provides selected students with individual lessons for 30 minutes each day. During these 30-minute sessions, they read many short paperback books and write their own stories and messages. Almost every minute of the lesson engages the child with real reading and writing. A skilled teacher works alongside the student, demonstrating, drawing attention to specific information that will be helpful, and encouraging the child's use of effective reading and writing strategies.

Tanya is well on the way to being an independent reader. Soon her individual program will be discontinued; she will be released from the program. This initially low-achieving reader will catch up to the other readers in her first-grade class. More important, she will have developed a self-extending system for reading that will help her keep

on learning to be a better reader and will enable her to use reading to learn.

As policy makers study ways to restructure our educational system, they must become aware of the potential of Reading Recovery for helping high-risk youngsters become proficient readers. To that end, this fastback will introduce educators and others to how Reading Recovery works, how teachers are trained to use the program, and how it can be implemented in a school or district. Clearly, Reading Recovery belongs on the restructuring agenda of American education.

Overview of Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is not a classroom reading program for all children. In fact, most children, if they have had a rich literacy environment in kindergarten and first grade, do not need such special attention. However, probably from 10% to 20% of children in U.S. schools have difficulty learning to read. These children are not necessarily slow or handicapped, but they do not seem to catch on quickly to the critical tasks of reading. These are the children for whom Reading Recovery was designed.

The problem of poor readers in the primary grades is pervasive, but the most common methods for dealing with them are inadequate. For example, it might seem logical just to wait for children to catch up, to retain them and let them take another run-through of the material. But that is an expensive option (between $3,000 and $6,000 for the extra year of schooling). However logical it seems, it does not work. Children who are repeating first grade initially appear to know more, but they soon reveal that experiencing the same curriculum over again does not help them.

Sometimes retention takes the form of specially grouped classes called by such names as "transition" classes or "junior" first grade. These classes often are staffed by skillful, well-meaning teachers who provide an enriched environment; but tracking children into these options still does not solve the problem. And remediation in compensatory group instruction, either through pull-out models (Johnston,

Allington, and Afflerbach 1985) or through in-class models (Slavin and Madden 1989), also does not provide enough support at the right time to help these young learners.

Remediation is inadequate to address the problems of these children. It comes too late and is ineffective. And remediation has the effect of slowing down instruction (Savage 1987). Although at-risk children may feel supported when remedial teachers have their best interests at heart, they never do catch up. They continue to need special help and are unable to make the most of the instruction provided in the classrooms. Down the line, their middle-grade teachers will have an even greater problem helping such youngsters.

Children who have trouble reading need some extra help early in their school careers. When they first begin having difficulty, they need someone to sit down with them and provide "something extra" to help them make sense of it all. That is the purpose of Reading Recovery.

Early Intervention, Not Remediation

In New Zealand children enter school on their fifth birthday and immediately become immersed in reading and writing. Children who have not engaged with reading by their sixth birthday are provided extra help through Reading Recovery. In the United States, Reading Recovery is provided to the lowest-achieving first-graders. The program is designed to intervene before these young children feel the full weight of failure.

In the past we have assumed that children having difficulty simply needed time to "mature." But there are good reasons not to wait. The literate society we live in and the nature of our education system demand that children begin to develop literacy early in their lives. Even if the education system were more accepting of a longer period to develop literacy, pressure from peers and the norms of the classroom community have an impact on children's self-concepts and their place in the literate community. When children first show signs of difficulty, it is time to intervene.

It is important not to "slow down" the learning of these children. Instead, their learning should be accelerated so that they can catch up with their peers and thus profit from the ongoing classroom instruction in reading and other areas of the curriculum. The concept of acceleration does not mean pushing children through materials that are too difficult for them. Instead, teachers support children as they engage in "reading work," that is, solving problems while reading text that is just a bit challenging for them. As children learn to make use of their knowledge in flexible ways, they develop efficient processing systems and thus are able to make faster progress.

Reading Recovery is not a package of materials with a step-by-step teacher's guide or a sequence of skills. Rather, children are provided structured, one-on-one lessons for one-half hour each day. The teacher's responsibility is to respond to each child in a way that supports the development of an independent system for reading and writing.

While a framework of reading and writing activities is used, Reading Recovery teachers are expected to adjust their actions to the needs of each child with whom they work. No two children read the same sequence of books. Each day teachers select a challenging new book for the individual child from a list of nearly 1,000 recommended books. Children also have their own boxes of books that they have read previously. They re-read these books to provide practice in using strategies "on the run" while reading fluently.

Each day the child composes a message that reflects that child's own language and experience. Teachers use this message to help children examine details such as letter features, words, and letter-sound relationships and to link children's language knowledge with print.

When an analysis of a child's reading and writing behavior indicates development of a self-improving system and the child can read at a level comparable to average first-grade readers in the school or district, the program is "discontinued" and another child enters the program slot. When children are released from the program, they

can then successfully profit from the good classroom instruction going on. The independent strategies they have developed help them to continue to learn without the need for intensive extra help. Thus Reading Recovery is considered a short-term intervention rather than a continuing remedial program.

Long-Term Staff Development

The Reading Recovery staff-development program is unique. Teachers meet weekly in after-school sessions for an entire year. Generally, they receive university course credit for their participation. The course is taught by a trained teacher-leader from their own district or a nearby district and who has completed the teacher-leader training course. Teachers say that the course is like no other they have taken in graduate or undergraduate work.

Teachers begin working with children immediately and learn "on the job." During inservice sessions, teachers conduct demonstration lessons behind a one-way glass while the rest of the teachers observe. As teachers observe, they discuss the lesson. Freed from teaching, the observing group can sharpen their observational powers and gain skill in prediction, hypothesizing, and the moment-to-moment decision making that makes for high-quality teaching. They learn to recognize evidence of strategy development and how to teach for strategies. The teacher-leader guides the group to challenge and increase their knowledge.

After the initial training, Reading Recovery teachers and teacher-leaders are expected to participate in continuing inservice sessions as long as they are involved in the program. The expectations for these continuing sessions are high; teachers demand more in-depth material; they want an update on current research. They also continue to teach demonstration lessons and observe their peers doing the same in a one-way glass facility. As a result of their extended training experience, teachers become comfortable with the process and work at a higher level of skill and understanding.

After completing their training, teachers have visits from the teacher-leader – but less frequently than in the training year, unless they have difficulty with the procedures or with a particular child. Trained Reading Recovery teachers require continuing support so that the process remains fresh and flexible and does not become mechanical. Teachers continually revise their procedures based on their experience with each student. As they gain experience, they become more independent. Conferences, a newsletter, and colleague visits also contribute to the network of support experienced by Reading Recovery teachers.

During the year after training, teachers begin to make colleague visits with each other. These meetings have proved to be a very productive way for teachers to increase their expertise. Typical activities during colleague visits include analyzing a child's strengths and needs and consulting reference sources together. Sometimes colleague visits involve three or four Reading Recovery teachers who conduct a "mini" inservice session for themselves.

Evidence of Success

Reading Recovery has been used for nine years in New Zealand. Studies of the program in New Zealand indicate that children in the program, regardless of sex, economic status, or sociolinguistic group, make accelerated progress and continue to make satisfactory progress after leaving the program. Less than 1% of the students in the program needed to be referred for continuing special services.

In addition to New Zealand, the program currently is being used in Australia, Canada, and 32 U.S. states; and the results consistently have been positive (see Wheeler 1984; Pinnell, DeFord, and Lyons 1988). In addition, a statewide study in Ohio that compared Reading Recovery to two other programs that involved one-on-one tutoring found that Reading Recovery produced results superior to the other programs (Pinnell, Lyons, and DeFord 1991).

How Reading Recovery Works

The Reading Recovery program includes a range of assessment procedures for diagnosing a child's difficulties and assessing progress. It also includes a repertoire of procedures for teaching. The teaching procedures, used within the lesson framework, are intended for one-on-one instruction.

Diagnostic Procedures

The diagnostic procedures used in Reading Recovery help teachers to conduct the careful observation and analyses necessary for effective instruction. The systematic use of these procedures helps teachers acquire an initial inventory of what the child knows and can do, as a beginning point for instruction. The assessments also help teachers recognize progress over time. Although these diagnostic procedures are commonly used by regular teachers, Reading Recovery teachers make more specific and intensive use of them.

Clay has outlined six initial assessment techniques for children recommended for the Reading Recovery program. The same six are used for final assessment when children are ready to be released from the program. It is important to note that no single technique is considered sufficient for making instructional decisions for individual children. Teachers are encouraged to look at several measures in order to have a comprehensive picture of the child's capabilities. Another

important point is that teachers must use more than the scores in their analyses of children's capabilities. While each measure yields a numerical score, children's attempts on individual tasks also are observed in order to gain insight into how children are using their knowledge. The six assessments are described briefly below.

Letter Identification. Children are asked to identify 54 characters, which include the upper- and lower-case letters and the printed version of the letters *a* and *g*. While children may not identify all the letters, they may make attempts that reveal their ability to notice visual similarities of letters, for example, substituting *h* for *n*.

Word Test. While drilling on the recognition of words is not a part of Reading Recovery instruction, one of the assessment procedures involves reading a list of frequently used words. This is a difficult task for children, but it gives teachers a chance to see how they perform when asked to recognize words out of context.

Concepts About Print. As young children have experience with reading and writing, there are some important concepts that they develop about the way print works. For example, they learn that readers and writers move from left to right and from top to bottom. They learn that space is used to separate words and that spoken words match the clusters of letters on the page. Many of the concepts are already developed prior to children's actually learning to read; if they are not, they are a possible source of confusion. The concepts about print assessment involves the teacher's reading a small storybook and asking a series of questions that involve the child in demonstrating knowledge. For example, children are asked to identify one and two letters as well as one and two words and to show where to start reading. These concepts represent important technical knowledge. If the child cannot use word-by-word matching while reading or does not understand directionality, the Reading Recovery teacher will place priority on helping the child develop those basic concepts quickly.

Writing Vocabulary. Children are asked to write all of the words they can, starting with their names. A 10-minute limit is placed on

this activity. In the initial assessment, children usually exhaust their word list in a shorter time. The teacher uses a standard set of prompts when children cannot generate words on their own when attempting to write. This assessment gives the teacher an idea of where to begin in working with the child in writing.

Dictation Task. In the dictation task, the teacher reads a brief sentence and asks the child to try to write the words. The exercise is scored not for accurate spelling but for the phonemes that are represented with appropriate letters. The idea is to determine the extent to which children can hear sounds in words and link them with letters. Several sentences are available for testing at different times in the year.

Running Record of Text Reading. The final assessment is used for initial and final testing, but it is also a powerful observational tool that Reading Recovery teachers use daily. For assessment purposes, a set of books, graded for difficulty, is used. Although the books are not those used in daily instruction, the running record can be used for any book the child is reading.

After the teacher introduces the book, the child reads independently while the teacher watches the text and takes down reading behavior using a shorthand technique. The teacher notes substitutions, repeats, omissions, insertions, and most important, self-corrections. After observing the reading, the teacher calculates an accuracy rate for the reading. It is desirable for the teacher to provide texts that the child can read at about 90% to 95% accuracy. As important as the accuracy rate, however, is the teacher's analysis of error and self-correction behavior. This analytic process provides a "window" on the child's progress.

Diagnostic Summary. Before the child begins the program, the teacher writes a diagnostic summary that combines the information gained from all six assessments. The summary specifies the child's strategies at the text level, word level, and letter-sound level; it provides a starting point for instruction.

Teaching Reading Recovery Lessons

The instructional program begins with several sessions during which teacher and child together explore reading and writing broadly. For 10 days they meet for 30-minute sessions, but the teacher does not try to teach new information. Instead, the teacher involves the child in reading and writing, allowing the child to use the knowledge revealed by the diagnostic measures. During this time, called "Roaming Around the Known," the sessions include reading to and with children. As children hear favorite stories, they spontaneously join in, much as happens in lap-reading stories. Teachers and children collaboratively write stories or make their own little books with pictures. With teacher support, they read many "little" books that have consistent patterns. They are behaving like readers and writers. Within the first few days of Roaming Around the Known, children usually stop saying "I can't read."

Roaming Around the Known provides a beginning foundation for child and teacher learning; both are ready to begin more intensive and structured sessions. Following a specified lesson framework, the child is able to accomplish a large amount of reading and writing in a 30-minute period.

The framework helps teachers establish routines in their instruction, thus allowing them to concentrate on children's reading and writing behavior and their own responses to that behavior. But the framework must be flexible; the lesson differs in that teachers vary the materials and their focus for each child. While most of the lesson time is devoted to reading many short books and composing and writing a message or story, the teacher's specific responses are different for each child. The teacher's response can show children how to check on their own reading. The young learners develop the ability to search for information, to use their acquired knowledge in flexible ways, to use one kind of information as a check on another, and to orchestrate many different strategies while reading.

Components of a Reading Recovery Lesson

Re-reading Familiar Stories. Usually at the beginning of the lesson, the child reads several books that have been read previously. The familiar books selected in any given day may range from easy to difficult. Eventually, the teacher may suggest that an easy book be "retired" so someone else can read it. More difficult selections that have been read only once or twice before and have some problems left to be solved give children a chance to use problem-solving strategies "on the run" while reading.

Re-reading familiar stories provides many opportunities for children to engage in reading extended text, an activity lacking in many classrooms – especially for children in the lower reading groups (Allington et al. 1986). Reading Recovery allows children to read five to six short books in every lesson, including several books that have been read at least twice before. This re-reading presents an easy reading situation; children can read fluently and can quickly solve the few problems that a familiar text may present. In re-reading familiar text, children are behaving like good readers and consolidating new learning. Teachers have many opportunities to point out to children what they are doing right.

Recording and analyzing reading behavior. The last familiar book, the one the child has read for the first time the day before, provides the text for recording and analyzing reading behavior. The child is expected to read "yesterday's new book" without help while the teacher takes a running record. The teacher may tell a word if the child is really stuck but tries to be as unobtrusive as possible. This assessment procedure is the most powerful tool of the Reading Recovery teacher and is used every day to analyze and make inferences about the child's growth in using effective strategies. The analysis of the running record guides instruction.

Composing and writing a message. Writing is part of every Reading Recovery lesson and is closely linked with reading. A message is composed in the child's own language with support from the teach-

er. This activity helps the child to learn about the details of written language. The child must write letter by letter and word by word and slowly examine the print while doing it. After some conversation, the child composes a manageable message and then the teacher and child work together to write it in a blank book with unlined paper. The book is turned sideways and the lower page is used to write the message. The upper page functions as a "practice" area where children can try out a word, write it several times quickly, or work out sound-to-letter correspondences.

After the message is written, the child reads it several times. Then the teacher quickly writes the same message on a sentence strip and subsequently cuts apart the words (or phrases) for the child to reassemble. This task requires the child to predict letters in words, to search using visual information, and to check by re-reading. The message is read again as a whole and then put in an envelope to take home.

Reading new and challenging material. Each day the teacher selects a new book that will offer a challenge but still be easy enough for the child to read at about 90% to 95% accuracy. Selecting an appropriate book presents some problems. If the book is too hard, the child's reading will break down and strategies will not be effective. In this case, the teacher takes the responsibility for the mistake and selects another book. On the other hand, if the book is too easy, the child will not have new opportunities to do "reading work," that is, solving problems while reading for meaning.

First, the teacher introduces the book by talking about the pictures and the story. The teacher may use some of the language patterns found in the text that might be difficult or unfamiliar. The teacher also may ask the child to locate one or two words, first predicting the initial letter. This introduction serves to build comprehension by ensuring the child understands the story before attempting to read it. The introduction and ensuing conversation about the book will vary according to the teacher's analysis of the child's needs. After the introduction, the child reads the book with support from the teacher.

Some of the most powerful teaching occurs while coaching the child through the book. The teacher must make decisions as to when and how to intervene; those decisions are based on previous knowledge of the child, on analysis of the features of the new text, and on general knowledge of the processes of literacy acquisition.

The purpose of teacher intervention is not to correct errors or to produce perfect reading. The teacher need not call attention to every miscue the child makes. Rather, the teacher tries to select the most powerful examples in order to show the child what reading is all about. The child's strengths are used as a base for untangling confusions and building new knowledge.

Personnel Roles in Reading Recovery

As an approach to literacy education of high-risk students, Reading Recovery involves an interrelated set of systems, each of which is vital to the success of the program. The systems include instruction, program implementation and administration, redirection after appropriate evaluation, and continuing updating of personnel and procedures.

The deliverer of instruction, the Reading Recovery teacher, is the foundation of the program; all other systems act to support the teacher and instruction. The redirection system involves the teacher-leader and site coordinator. The implementation and administration system involves the trainer of teacher-leaders, school principals, and other administrators. Let us examine the roles of personnel in each of these systems.

Reading Recovery Teachers

The most important role falls to those persons who provide service directly to children, the Reading Recovery teachers. Teachers selected for Reading Recovery training should be experienced primary teachers. They do not necessarily have to have special credentials in reading. Teachers attend 30 hours of training in which they learn how to administer the diagnostic survey and how to select children for the program. They continue to attend weekly sessions throughout the year.

At least three times during the year, each teacher agrees to teach a child "behind the glass." This activity involves making arrangements with parents about schedules and transportation.

Reading Recovery teachers teach four children individually in 30-minute sessions each day. The teacher-in-training must have experience with a range of children in order to develop the conceptual base and flexibility needed for Reading Recovery teaching. But for several reasons, it has been found to be unproductive for teachers to work all day in Reading Recovery. First, it is difficult for teachers to maintain the intensity that the one-on-one setting and the lesson framework require. Second, teachers must keep careful records and reflect on each child's strengths and progress. When too many children are assigned to a single teacher, it becomes difficult to respond to each child's individual needs, and teachers may become mechanical in their lessons. Finally, it is important for the school district to have these highly skilled teachers working in other capacities, such as in regular classrooms or with remedial reading groups, during the rest of the school day.

Reading Recovery teachers are responsible for communicating with the children's regular classroom teachers about the program and about individual children's progress. They arrange periodic conferences with the regular teachers and respond to requests regarding children who are having difficulty in reading. They observe Reading Recovery children in classroom reading groups to ensure transfer of learning and continue to monitor the progress of children after they have left the program.

Reading Recovery teachers also are responsible for communicating with parents. They conduct conferences with parents when children enter and leave the program. They also arrange for parents to observe a Reading Recovery lesson with their child. Often parents come along when children are brought for demonstration lessons and can observe behind the glass. The Reading Recovery teacher provides children with a book or a cut-up sentence to take home each day and

encourages parents to provide time for the child to read at home. While Reading Recovery teachers do not assume the child is receiving any instruction at home, it is important for parents to know that they are partners in the child's learning. Most parents are eager to have their child receive extra help, and they usually are pleased when their children bring home books they can read.

Classroom Teachers

Classroom teachers are partners with Reading Recovery teachers. Instruction in the classroom and in Reading Recovery complement, reinforce, and extend each other. The classroom teacher confers frequently with the Reading Recovery teacher about the children in the program. When their schedules permit, classroom teachers observe Reading Recovery lessons. They advise on selection of children for the program and when children can be released from the program.

In schools where the regular primary reading program is based largely on sequenced learning of isolated bits of knowledge and the predominant method of assessment is standardized testing, the introduction of Reading Recovery can serve as a catalyst for new approaches in the regular primary reading program. During the first year of Reading Recovery implementation at several sites, the teacher-leader and district administrators provided primary teachers with a collection of little books to use in the regular classroom and offered inservice sessions to help teachers learn how to use them for both reading and writing lessons.

Teacher-Leaders

Teacher-leaders are the key to implementing a Reading Recovery program. Clay refers to teacher-leaders as the "redirecting system" that is necessary to keep the traditional system from gradually transforming the innovation back into the old practices. They teach children daily, teach other teachers, organize the program, collect and

analyze data on children, and serve as advocates of the program with school policy makers and community members.

Teacher-leaders complete a full year of post-M.A. graduate work at a university approved to prepare teacher-leaders. As part of this program, they teach four children daily and participate in a clinical course similar to that provided for teachers. They take their turns teaching behind the one-way glass. Teacher-leaders in training experience the program both from the perspective of the teachers they will lead and their own roles as leaders. The teacher-leader training program also includes a year-long theoretical seminar in which they become familiar with the theoretical base for Reading Recovery and the current research related to literacy and language learning.

Finally, teacher-leaders complete an extensive field internship. Throughout their training year, they work with teachers in Reading Recovery classes as they practice their skills in behind-the-glass demonstration lessons. And they provide one-on-one assistance to teachers in training. Working alongside experienced teacher-leaders, they learn the multiple roles involved in implementing Reading Recovery as a system intervention.

University Trainer

Since the Reading Recovery teacher-leader training is conducted as an academic course in a university, it benefits by having access to the most recent research and can be updated and revised as needed. The university trainer must have completed a year-long program that includes all levels of training: teaching children, teaching teachers, and planning and teaching the teacher-leader class. The trainer also must continue teaching children daily. This does not mean simply observing children or working with them on an occasional basis; it means assuming responsibility for the one-on-one teaching. This requirement is difficult to implement in a university setting where the work load seldom allows time for such activities, but it is a necessary program feature.

The university trainer teaches the theoretical and clinical portions of the course and observes teacher-leaders in their field assignments, where they both teach children and work with local teachers. In a sense, the university trainer is responsible for the quality of the program in the area schools where Reading Recovery is being implemented. University trainers also collect data and prepare reports on the success of the program in the state or region. Most university trainers conduct their own research projects, and their research has helped to improve all aspects of the Reading Recovery program.

Site Coordinators

Site coordinators assume administrative responsibilities for implementing Reading Recovery. There are site coordinators at both school district and university levels. In both cases, the site coordinator oversees the preparation of the facility, manages the budget, negotiates contracts, and conducts vital internal and external communication. The site coordinator's role is critical in guiding the growth and dissemination of Reading Recovery from the training site. While some teacher-leaders and university trainers also assume the role of site coordinator, the work load and scope of responsibility involved can be met better through differentiated staffing.

District Administrators

District administrators play an important role in the implementation of Reading Recovery. Without the commitment of the principal, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to introduce Reading Recovery in a school. Likewise, the central administration must support the project. If Chapter 1 funds are used to support Reading Recovery, the administrator for the federal program must be committed to the project and involved in planning it.

Administrators must fully understand the unique nature of the Reading Recovery program. Implementing the program likely will require

rethinking standard operating procedures, for example, getting parent permission and arranging transportation for children to participate in demonstration lessons behind the one-way mirror at a remote site. And it will require substantial investment of released time and funds for the long-term staff development required of Reading Recovery teachers. Administrators are in a position to make the system support an innovation such as Reading Recovery. Only with their full commitment can the goals of the program be achieved.

Getting Started

Those who have successfully implemented Reading Recovery recommend a cautious approach when starting the program. Typically, district policy makers send a fact-finding team to visit a training site. There, they observe teachers and children in training sessions; they also observe individual Reading Recovery lessons. They talk with teachers and administrators at the site and look at the evidence of results. If the team is convinced of the value of Reading Recovery, it should begin the planning process by holding awareness sessions for the larger school community. Often an advisory group is convened for the region or state. This group assists in communicating the goals of the program, guides the planning process, and helps to organize a consortium of school districts to sponsor teacher-leader training and provide the teacher course and site support.

A consortium of school districts or a regional plan makes sense economically. One teacher-leader can serve several smaller school districts, thus decreasing the costs of training. Eventually the teacher-leader will have trained all the teachers needed for a geographic area and will move to a maintenance function; so it is wise for the advisory group to create a long-range plan.

The most difficult part of the implementation process is preparing a teacher-leader to assume leadership for the project. That may mean sending a prospective teacher-leader to be in residence for a year at a university for training. Once that teacher-leader is trained, how-

ever, the process quickly accelerates. Typically a teacher-leader trains 12 teachers per year; however, the addition of more teachers to the project each year increases the continuing contact workload of the teacher-leader. Resources and time are necessary to prepare a qualified person for the key role of teacher-leader. On the other hand, once trained, these teacher-leaders become valuable resource persons for the district and can provide inservice sessions for classroom teachers and reading specialists, can assist in textbook selection, and can serve on district planning teams.

Reading Recovery as a Systemic Intervention

Two of the most difficult things to accomplish in educational innovation are: 1) replicating the innovation in other sites and contexts, and 2) helping the innovation survive after the initial "honeymoon" period. Reading Recovery has some built-in features that address both of these concerns.

First, the program always is initiated and implemented with care, planning, and a strong support base. Even during the training year, the teacher-leader candidate travels back to the home site to participate in planning, to provide awareness sessions, and to select the first training class. Another strength is that different training models are used for teachers and for those who train teachers. The model is not passed from teacher to teacher as a set of mechanically applied procedures. Teacher-leaders are especially prepared to support teachers' development of a conceptual base, from which effective implementation will occur. Teacher-leaders and site coordinators receive support in implementation for several years after the training period. In addition, the university trainers and site coordinators provide support for the program for at least five years; and teacher-leaders receive frequent communications, such as the newsletter, *The Running Record*, and other mailings.

The Reading Recovery model is a self-renewing system. Personnel include teachers, teacher-leaders, and university trainers, all of whom continue to teach children daily in Reading Recovery. The

university/school partnership is an important part of the model. Even after training, staff development continues at every level, thus providing continuous updating. Teachers and teacher-leaders can attend a Reading Recovery conference each January, and an institute held each summer helps teacher-leaders update their skills. Simultaneously, data is collected and reports are produced at each level. Examination of this information helps teachers and teacher-leaders to improve their teaching and the program systems. Reading Recovery is more than the lessons for children or the year-long staff-development program; it is a continuing network of support and a self-monitoring system in which teachers conduct daily and yearly assessments of individual and collective student success.

The systemic nature of Reading Recovery with its unique teacher-training model helps the program work and survive as an innovation. The model helps teachers develop the ability to make powerful instructional decisions as they interact with children during authentic reading and writing activities. Children engaged in massive amounts of reading and writing, a skilled teacher, and a support system – all these help to make Reading Recovery work. Reading Recovery is not easy work, nor does it answer every problem of children experiencing difficulty with reading. Some children will continue to need long-term special help. But Reading Recovery does have the power to make a difference for young children at risk of failure. The process is complex, but it is showing us what can work and what it will take to make a difference for high-risk populations of children.

Kim Marshall (1991), principal of the Mather Elementary School in Boston, which has adopted Reading Recovery, offers a testimony for the program that is fitting to conclude this fastback:

> One comment I've heard about Reading Recovery is that it is a great program but too expensive to be broadly replicated. I think the opposite is true. . . . Students who could not read a single word and are tied up in knots at the beginning of the program are reading fluently on grade level 12-15 weeks later, and virtually none of these students

will ever need Chapter 1 or Special Education services again. . . . So it's not a question of inner-city schools not being able to afford Reading Recovery; the truth is we can't afford NOT to adopt it!

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